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School Committee Minutes 09-25-2001

DRAFT (unapproved minutes)

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ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2001
7:30 PM

Present: **Joani LaMachia, Chair** **Suzanne Owayda**
 David W. McKenna, Vice Chair **Paul Schlichtman**
 Denis J. Sullivan, Secretary **Martin J. Thrope**
 Barbara C. Goodman (@ 9:05)

Superintendent: Kay Donovan
Asst. Supt. Joanne Gurry
Chief Financial Officer David Kale
Dir. Spec. Ed. Marilyn Bisbicos

Call To Order: 7:35

Welcome Back To School Community

Ms. LaMachia, Chair of the Committee asked for a moment of silence and took the opportunity to acknowledge the recent tragedy in New York. Also closer to home, Marie Schuler, teacher at Dallin School for many years and Brenda Tocci, daughter of Ann & Jack Burns and mother of Ryan and Cord Tocci, both students at the Ottoson Middle School both lost their battles with Cancer.

Ms. LaMacha emphasized that our community can be secure in the knowledge that our schools take their responsibilities seriously and that the School Committee will address the important safety issues and concerns that arise. The Chair thanked principals and teachers for their thoughtful communication to parents and students to help them feel safe.

Ms. LaMacha welcomed back the Committee and declared that she is hopeful and excited for what they can accomplish as a school committee, especially the continued work on the system-wide goal setting process.

Ms. LaMachia presented the Committee with the challenge to have meetings conclude by 11:00 PM; she admitted that the Committee does their best work before 11:00 PM and asked for their support.

Supt. Donovan stated that APS would make every effort to assure that students know that they are safe. On September 11th the schools responded according to the ages and maturity of the students. The elementary schools did not tell the children what happened during the day. The middle school held an assembly, and at the high school Mr. Woodcock held the bells and spoke over the intercom system explaining the events. The next morning each school held an early morning emergency faculty meeting to discuss the situation and made plans on how to respond to student needs.

The schools do have crisis procedures in place, and each staff member possesses a crisis booklet. Mrs. Donovan suggested that the booklets are copied and sent home to parents so that they are aware of our responses. We are updating our safety procedures and are establishing new crisis teams; we have a crisis team in each school. Space study of all of our schools of every opening put on a CD that will be kept at each school as well as at the Police and Fire Stations. All elementary schools are locked and we do have a back up data system.

Supt. Donovan stated that the opening of school went well and reported:

- .. The Hardy School was ready, thanks to everyone who participated in its readying
- .. The dedication for the Hardy School will take place on Sunday, October 28th
- .. A section of the playground will be rededicated to Nora Lynch
- .. Class size for the most part is excellent
- .. Bill Carey has been named to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from MASC
- .. Barbara Goodman has been appointed to the All State School Committee
- .. AHS Guidance implemented expanded hours 3:00-7:00 PM once a month
- .. MCAS scores are coming in
- .. Employees are attending restraint training workshops
- .. Enrollment figures are up

Public Participation

Jim Robillard of Arlington Youth Development publicly thanked Athletic Director Rob DiLoreto and Guidance Director Vin DAntona for opening the school for counseling to athletes after the tragic accident in which a Belmont student collapsed and died during a baseball game.

Mr. Arthur Arles of Arlington Youth Development expressed disappointment that the new scoreboard had not yet been installed. Mr. Arles requested a time frame of the purchase and installation of the scoreboard; he also offered to help in any way.

Chantal Nouvellon, parent of a six year old, would like to have an after school French program in one of the elementary schools. She inquired into the requirements/process of starting and sponsoring a program in one of the schools. Supt. Donovan informed Ms. Nouvellon that the Community Education Program offers foreign languages and will have the director, Molly Leong respond to Ms. Nouvellon's request.

Secretary's Report

Mr. Sullivan reviewed correspondence.

Hardy After School Program

Gerald Carmody, Principal of Hardy School, introduced Todd Morse as the Director of the Hardy After School Program (HASP). Goals of the program are to:

- .. Provide a balanced environment for learning and play
- .. Integrate of the curriculum with after school play
- .. Provide and coordinate enrichment programs

There are 47 part-time students currently enrolled which equals approximately 30 full time students. There are 2 additional staff members besides Mr. Morse. The program runs from 2:15 to 6:00, costs \$15.00 per day. The teacher/student ratio is 1-9 or 1-12.

The long-term goal is to offer short-term recreational programs for students. Any profits made in the after school program will stay in the revolving account to offset various enrichment offerings.

Mr. Carmody explained that as a pilot program all of the initial paperwork and set up has been established so that its expansion to other schools would have a foundation with which to work with.

Peirce Field/Scoreboard Update

Mr. Kale, CFO, explained that the bids for the scoreboard, message center, and logo board came in significantly higher than the available budget. The increased cost is due to the fact that the site is a regulated site and entails the excavation and removal of contaminated soil. An alternative plan would use the existing foundation and steel beams for just the scoreboard; the message center would be purchased in kept in storage by the vendor. Upon completion of the contaminated site the scoreboard and message center will be installed with a new foundation. Mr. Kale explained that this method would keep the cost within budget. The goal would be to have the scoreboard up and operating prior to Thanksgiving, however until he receives a confirmed delivery date it is not absolute.

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent reported on:

- .. Grants received to date total \$1,202,709.00, with another million dollars anticipated within the next few weeks.
- .. Hiring Report: There have been 53 full-time and 6 part-time employees hired for the opening of school.
- .. Enrollment Figures: 4,359 students are currently enrolled in APS, an increase of 62 students from last year; class size in general is good.
- .. Summer Workshops: Staff of APS attended a variety of workshops over the summer including Teachers As Scholars, integrated technology, foreign language, health, music, art and continued work on the Frameworks.
- .. Mrs. Donovan asked the Committee to accept the recommendation of the Vision 2020 Standing Committee to appoint AHS junior Sean Garballey as the student representative of that committee.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted to appoint Sean Garballey as the AHS student representative to the Vision 2020 Standing Committee. Unanimous. (Ms. Goodman not present)

“ Supt. Donovan informed the Committee that the Superintendents Advisory Committee requested to change the APS Staff Professional Development Day from March 20, 2002 to October 29, 2001. Citing the many new hires, the advisory committee believed an earlier date would be more beneficial to those new staff members.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted to accept the Superintendents recommendation to reschedule APS Staff Professional Development Day from March 20, 2002 to October 29, 2001. Unanimous (Ms. Goodman not present)

“ Mr. Kale reviewed a 1st draft of the School Capital Plan 5 year plan (2003-2007). He outlined the proposed requests for buildings, student transportation, communication, building security, maintenance vehicles & equipment, and project adventure/fitness equipment. A point of concern regarding the repair of the window lintels at the Hardy School was discussed.

Mr. Thrope (PTBC member) explained that the need for the repair became apparent during renovation; immediate repair is not necessary but it needs to be dealt with at some point in the near future.

Discussion of Field Trips

Supt. Donovan informed the Committee that initially she was recommending approval for the field trips (Performing Arts trip to Italy in February and the 5th Grade Science Camp). In light of recent events the principals voted unanimously to ban all out of state field trips for the school year. The Supt. noted that since the fifth grade science trip is part of the science curriculum the students would be allowed to attend. Mr. Sullivan expressed concern that we not set policy or make a blanket statement for the entire year but proposed that the Committee reassess the international situation and revisit the issue later in the year. As to out of state field trips Mr. Sullivan asked that each request be brought before the School Committee for their consideration on a case-by-case basis. Ms. Owayda and Mr. Thrope were in agreement with Mr. Sullivan. Mr. Thrope pointed out that we need to make a decision relative to the field trip (Italy) on what we know now and the current situation. Ms. Goodman emphasized that the performing arts trip is one of the beautiful things that we do but she does not want students on planes.

Mr. McKenna believed that if we say no to one group it would be unfair to go ahead and approve an out of country trip later in the school year.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was

Voted that the School Committee does not approve the Performing Arts trip to Italy in February 2002 at this time.

Unanimous

Recess

Rebuild: Phase II Update

Supt. Donovan stated that earlier this spring the School Committee was asked to look at methods on how to control costs of completing the remaining three elementary schools. Over the summer Mrs. Donovan, some members of the school committee, and school department personnel met with the School Building Assistance Bureau, the Finance Committee, and the Permanent Town Building Committee to discuss options. Because it appears that there may not be enough funding to finish all of the schools another plan must be developed to submit to the finance committee and to town meeting. The Superintendent distributed a list of preliminary ideas to consider controlling costs, (i.e. reexamining number of classrooms and projected enrollments for the remaining schools). Because of the time Mrs. Donovan stated that she would deliver the suggestions with the space utilization report for the Members examine. The Superintendent invited members to call with any ideas or further input before it goes to the infrastructure committee (comprised of a representative from School Committee, the Town Manager, the Town Treasurer, a representative from the Town Planning Department, chair of PTBC, chair of the Long Range Planning Committee, Supt. of Schools, chair of Finance Committee and the chair of the selectmen). It will then go the finance committee and finally to town meeting.

Human Rights Commission

Chairman, Joani LaMachia suggested that the Committee take under advisement what is being presented tonight by the Human Rights Commission and the Boy Scouts of America, and come back at our next meeting with whatever action is agreed upon.

Christine Deshler representing the Human Rights Commission addressed the Committee relative to the Boy Scouts of America discrimination policy. Ms. Deshler explained that she wanted to be clear that their objection is not about preventing the Boy Scouts from using the schools for meetings or from distributing literature as long as any other group is allowed to do so.

However they are opposed to the two schools, Bishop and Stratton acting as a chartering or organizing entity on behalf of the boy scouts. They are troubled that our public schools are seen as endorsing this organization that is “required to follow the national policy” in discriminating against gays. In addition she emphasized that the town by-laws prohibits discrimination.

Although the Patriot council has adopted a non-discrimination policy effective July 2001, an article in the Boston Globe dated August 10, 2001 detailed the denial of an applicant because of his sexual orientation. The HRC does not feel confident enough that there is a non-discrimination policy and HRC is asking the School Committee to prevent our schools from endorsing the boys scout organization.

Stephen Gilligan began by clarifying what he called “misinformation.” The Bishop and Stratton, each charter a troop, but chartering is not necessarily the same as sponsoring. The school does not give any organizational support or provide any money; it does provide a safe meeting place for children. The parents of the cub scouts are the organization and they use the school as the school committee intends the schools to be used; as a neighborhood community service. Mr. Gilligan stated that there is no national discrimination policy on membership applications; and local applications are handled locally. Each application requires three references, some councils may at their discretion conduct background checks but it is not standard procedure. No youth member has ever had his or her membership denied. In reference to the Boston Globe article, Mr. Gilligan explained that the individual applied for a youth membership when he was not a youth and in addition lived in New Hampshire (125 miles away); this made him ineffective as a leader in Boston considering the distance.

The Boston Minuteman Council is one of thirty councils nationwide who has taken a stand against discrimination and the implementation of the non-discrimination policy. No member of the Boston Minuteman Council has ever had their membership revoked. Actions or activities that violate the guidelines (specifically the youth protection guidelines) are done at the request of the local council.

Discussion by the Committee followed relative to holding meetings at other locations i.e. the recreation department, the rotary club or churches, what are legal obligations are, and whether any other school communities are experiencing the same dilemma. The committee requested updated material from the DOE, and an opinion from our legal counsel from the Superintendent. A copy of the boys scouts charter, application, and the youth protection curriculum provided by Mr. Gilligan. These items will be discussed at the next meeting.

Discussion of Policy Manual

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. McKenna it was

Voted to suspend the rules to consider policy, JKAA Physical Restraint of Students. 6-1 (Ms. Goodman opposed)

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted to approve policy JKAA Physical Restraint of Students. 6-1 (Ms. Goodman stated that her no vote was due to the fact that the State did not provide sufficient time to review the policy).

Mr. Thrope stated that the next policy & procedure subcommittee is scheduled for Thursday, October 4th at 4:00 PM. Members with concerns/issues with any policy should be bring them to Kay before that meeting. Mr. McKenna stated that he did need clarification on one of the policies.

New Business

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Thrope voted that the next school committee meeting take place Thursday, October 11, 2001 @ 7:30 PM Unanimous

- “ The Community Relations Subcommittee will meet on October 9th @ 7:30 PM
- “ The Specialized Student Services Subcommittee will meet on October 16th @ 5:30 PM
- “ Ms. LaMachia requested that members read the System-Wide Goal Setting Process (included in the packet) before the next meeting.
- “ The Task Force on Safety will schedule a meeting to address Ms. Owaydas concerns regarding the school systems emergency procedures.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. McKenna it was

Voted to enter executive session for the purpose of negotiations with no further business to be conducted upon returning to open session. Roll Call: Unanimous

Executive Session: 11:00 -11:35 PM

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 11:35 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Tassone, Committee Secretary